

Testimony on SB 310

AN ACT REQUIRING THE COMMISSIONER OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TO SUBMIT A REPORT ON CASEWORKER RETENTION AND PERMANENCY OUTCOMES.

By: Kelsie I. Canessa
University of Saint Joseph
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Dear Chairman Anwar, Chairwoman Linehan, Vice Chairwoman Welander, Ranking Member Senator Kelly, Ranking Member Representative Dauphinais, and Distinguished Members of the Connecticut General Assembly Children Committee:

My name is Kelsie Canessa, I am a Master of Social Work Student at the University of Saint Joseph in West Hartford, and a resident of Middletown. This academic year I have been working diligently with Fostering the Community to understand different issues that arise in foster care and how those issues impact the children in the care and custody of the Commissioner. During my time with Fostering the community I have written a White Paper ([Fostering the Community White Paper.pdf](#)) and co-authored an Op Ed published in the CT Mirror discussing the impact of case worker turnover on permanency.

I am here today to communicate my unwavering support for *S.B. 310 - An Act Requiring the Commissioner of Children and Families to Submit a Report on Caseworker Retention and Permanency Outcomes*. In passing this Bill we can take the time to see the impacts case worker turnover has on children in Foster Care right here in Connecticut. With this knowledge, we can work as a community to better protect children to give them back their childhood. This bill is not intended to make major systemic changes. It is designed to provide a mechanism for studying the problems with case worker turnover in order to help both staff and children through an evidence-based lens. As such, it can serve as a first step in improving a system that is meant to protect children rather than do more harm. Research done in Milwaukee has shown that when a child changes case workers just once, their chances of permanency drop from a 74.5% chance in 12 months to a 17.5% chance in that same time frame. Moreover, when a child is living in a constant state of uncertainty, it leads to further emotional and behavioral issues. Children need to form healthy attachments in order to thrive, and a consistent case worker is one effective way to provide this. When children feel as though they have nobody in their corner, they are more likely to act out and become self-injurious and less likely to advocate for their own needs. It is, therefore, important to establish an evidence base in understanding the impacts of case worker turnover, case transfers, and their detrimental impact on the children in the care of the state. Please use your vote to send a message to these children that you care about their chances to succeed, and to show to them that their lives hold value. After all, they only get one childhood.

I urge you to vote in favor of *S.B. 310: An Act Requiring the Commissioner of Children and Families to Submit a Report on Caseworker Retention and Permanency Outcomes*.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Kelsie I. Canessa
Graduate Student